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Saunders Supply Company
Public Information Meeting
April 4, 1989

Introduction

A public information meeting regarding the Saunders Supply Company Site was held Tuesday evening, April 4, 1989, at the Oakland Elementary School, Suffolk, Virginia. Community interviews had been held December 15-16, 1988, during which interest was expressed by residents for an information meeting on EPA activities. Approximately 40 persons attended the meeting. Information was presented on the Superfund process, the Community Relations Program, past site activities, state involvement, and the Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study. After these presentations, the floor was opened for questions and comments. The length of the meeting was approximately 2 hours.

The meeting was conducted by the following individuals:

Theresa Bickel, Community Relations Coordinator, U.S. EPA
Andrew Palestini, Project Manager, U.S. EPA
Tim Longe, Project Manager, Virginia Department of Waste Management

Chris Jones, the councilman from the Chuckatuck borough, opened the meeting with introductions. He stated that the meeting would be conducted by EPA officials, and that he was in attendance as an elected official from the area. He introduced other local officials in attendance: Tom Hines, Director of Public Works; Tom Underwood, Assistant City Manager; Mark Thompson, Director of Public Utilities.

Presentations

Theresa Bickel - Community Relations Coordinator, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Theresa Bickel began the presentation by explaining EPA's Superfund process, as it relates to the Saunders Supply Company site, and the

Community Relations Program, as a component of it. EPA begins the process by verifying the existence of hazardous substances on-site. In this case, the State of Virginia did the initial verification. EPA then determined that further sampling was required, and based on the sampling results, determined that a potential threat to human health and the environment existed. The site was then proposed for the National Priorities List (NPL), EPA's list of potential hazardous waste sites. Once a site is proposed for the NPL, a Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study (RI/FS) is conducted. The Remedial Investigation (RI) determines the nature and extent of the contamination. This is followed by the Feasibility Study (FS) which determines the alternatives available to cleanup the site. The Saunders Supply Company site is at the RI point in the process.

EPA has an active Community Relations Program. The Community Relations Plan for Saunders Supply Company was developed after community interviews were conducted in December, 1988, and is a guide for communication between the EPA and residents of the community. It is available for review in the Information Repository, which has been established at the Morgan Memorial Library. The Information Repository will contain all documents generated by the EPA regarding the site, including the Community Relations Plan, the RI/FS, workplans for this study, and any fact sheets. After the RI/FS, the EPA will develop a proposed plan for cleanup of the site. Comments by residents of the community on this proposed plan will be solicited, and a public meeting will be scheduled. The final stage is implementation of the cleanup.

Under Superfund, residents of a community may apply for Technical Assistance Grants by forming a citizens group. Technical Assistance Grants allow for a community to enlist a technical advisor for assistance in reviewing EPA's work on-site.

Theresa Bickel stated that she was available to address residents' questions, comments or concerns. Residents may also telephone Chris Jones, or Jamie Walters, the Community Relations Coordinator for the State of Virginia. She then introduced John Horn and Tim Longe, Project Managers for the State of Virginia.

Tim Longe - Project Manager, Virginia Department of Waste Management

Tim Longe spoke on the State's involvement at the Saunders Supply Company site. The State of Virginia, Department of Waste Management will oversee activities of the EPA to ensure that the EPA acts in conformance with existing state regulations, and that cleanup activities are satisfactory to the State. They also are available to listen to community concerns.

Andrew Palestini - Project Manager, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Andrew Palestini presented plans for the study of the site. The purpose of the RI part of the study is to define the extent and direction of contamination, and to identify the risk associated with the contamination. The purpose of the FS will be to determine methods to mitigate the contamination and the risk. Since EPA does not have the in-house personnel to conduct these studies, the agency has hired a consulting engineering firm, Ecology and Environment, Inc., to conduct the study under the direction of EPA.

Andrew Palestini explained the processes and chemicals which were involved at the site. The plant initially used a pentachlorophenol (PCP) process to treat wood. This process was begun in 1964 and gradually phased out until 1984. In 1974, it began use of a chromated copper arsenic process and it is still used today. As part of the PCP process, sludge was generated, and was burned on site for five years; sludge also was sprayed along an access road. These areas were indicated on the map (see Attachment A), as well as the area where the wood was treated.

Groundwater monitoring wells and other sampling locations will be located throughout the site. Eight new groundwater wells and five existing wells, which had been put in place by the Saunders Supply Company, will test for possible groundwater contamination. A background well, one of the new monitoring wells, will be placed upstream, and at a distance from any possible contamination. It will give an indication of what the natural groundwater is like.

Other samples to be taken include boring samples and surface water and sediment samples. Boring samples will determine where the

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contamination is, and how deep it is. Samples will also indicate the level of contamination. Boring samples will be taken on either side of the access road. The exact location of surface water and sediment samples has not been determined. Generally, sediment samples will be taken along the edge and middle of the pond, along the periphery of Godwin's Millpond, the other side of the 10 mile Creek, and Chuckatuck Channel. The purpose is to determine how far contamination has gone.

Air monitoring will also be conducted. The air will be tested based on predictions of an air transport model. Testing will be in a certified EPA laboratory, with properly checked procedures.

Once all the sampling information is in, EPA will identify the risk associated with the site.

After the RI/FS, EPA will evaluate the alternatives to clean up the site, and choose one of these alternatives. The choice will be reflected in an official Record of Decision.

Questions and Answers

Issues raised in the question and answer session related to the sampling process, determination of risk, use of past studies and site investigations, and EPA cost recovery. In addition, residents expressed support for Saunders Supply Company and the remedial work it has done in the past. Questions were answered by Theresa Bickel, Andrew Palestini, Tim Longe, and Bill Hagel, U.S. EPA, Chief of the General Remedial Response Section.

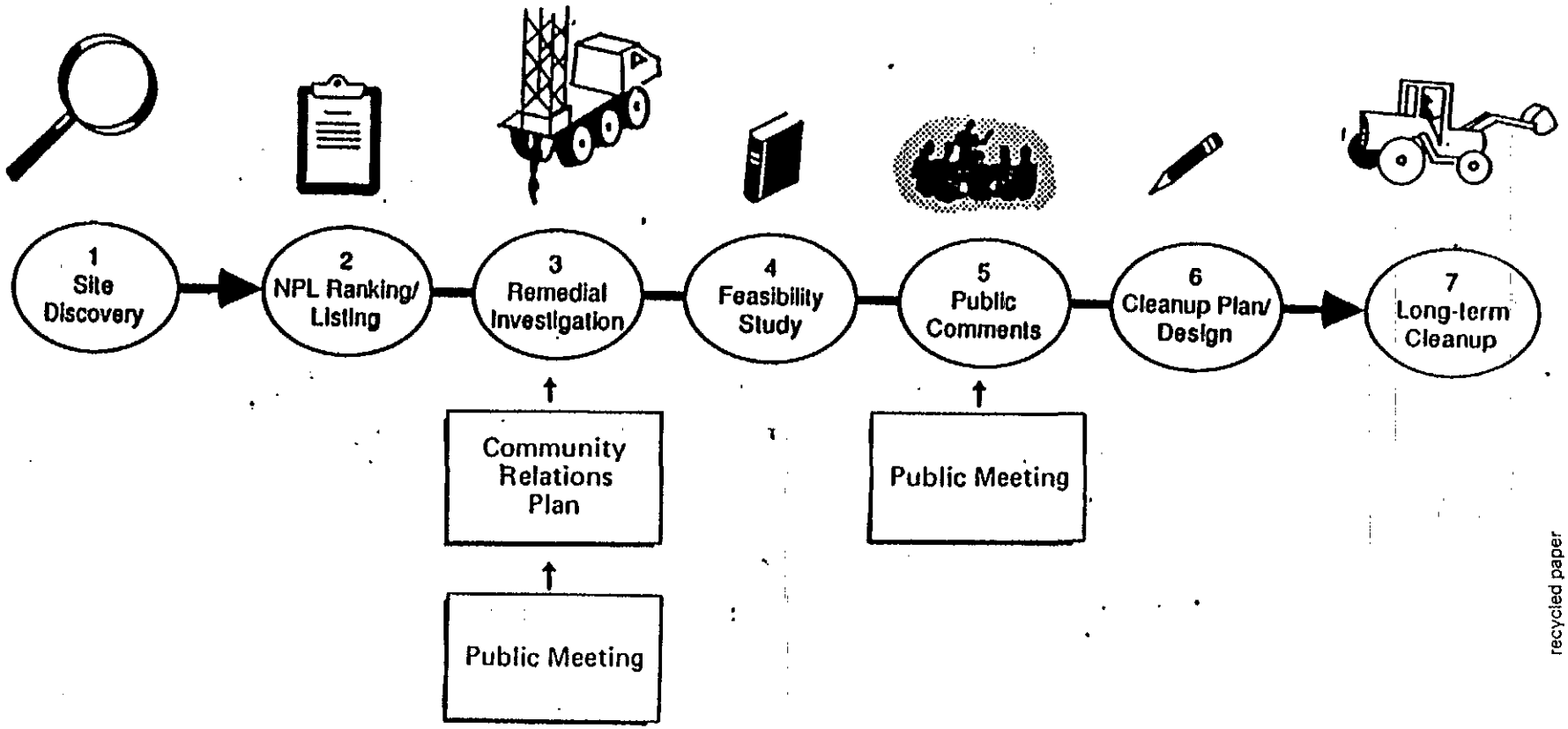
Attachments

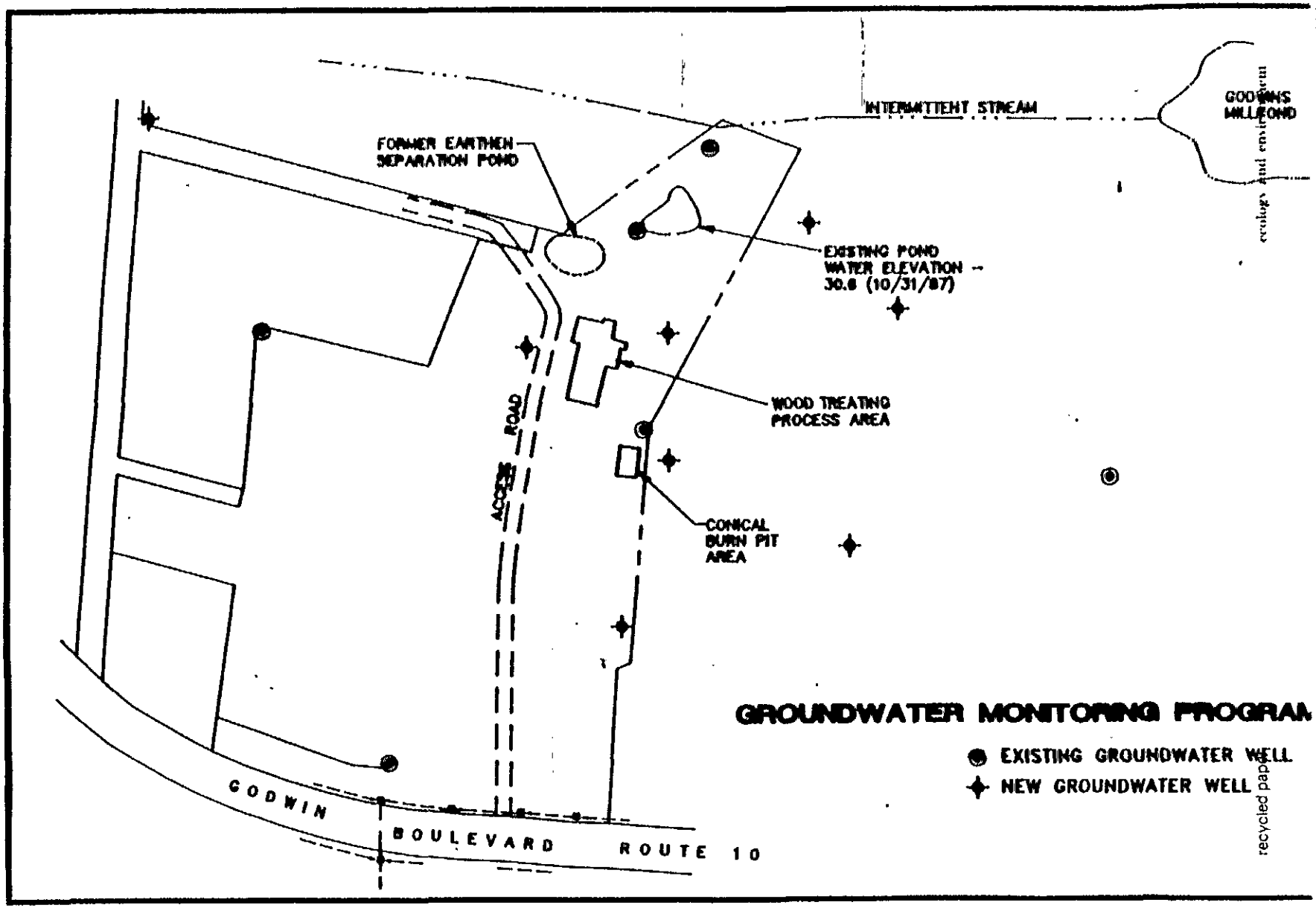
A: Copies of overheads from presentations

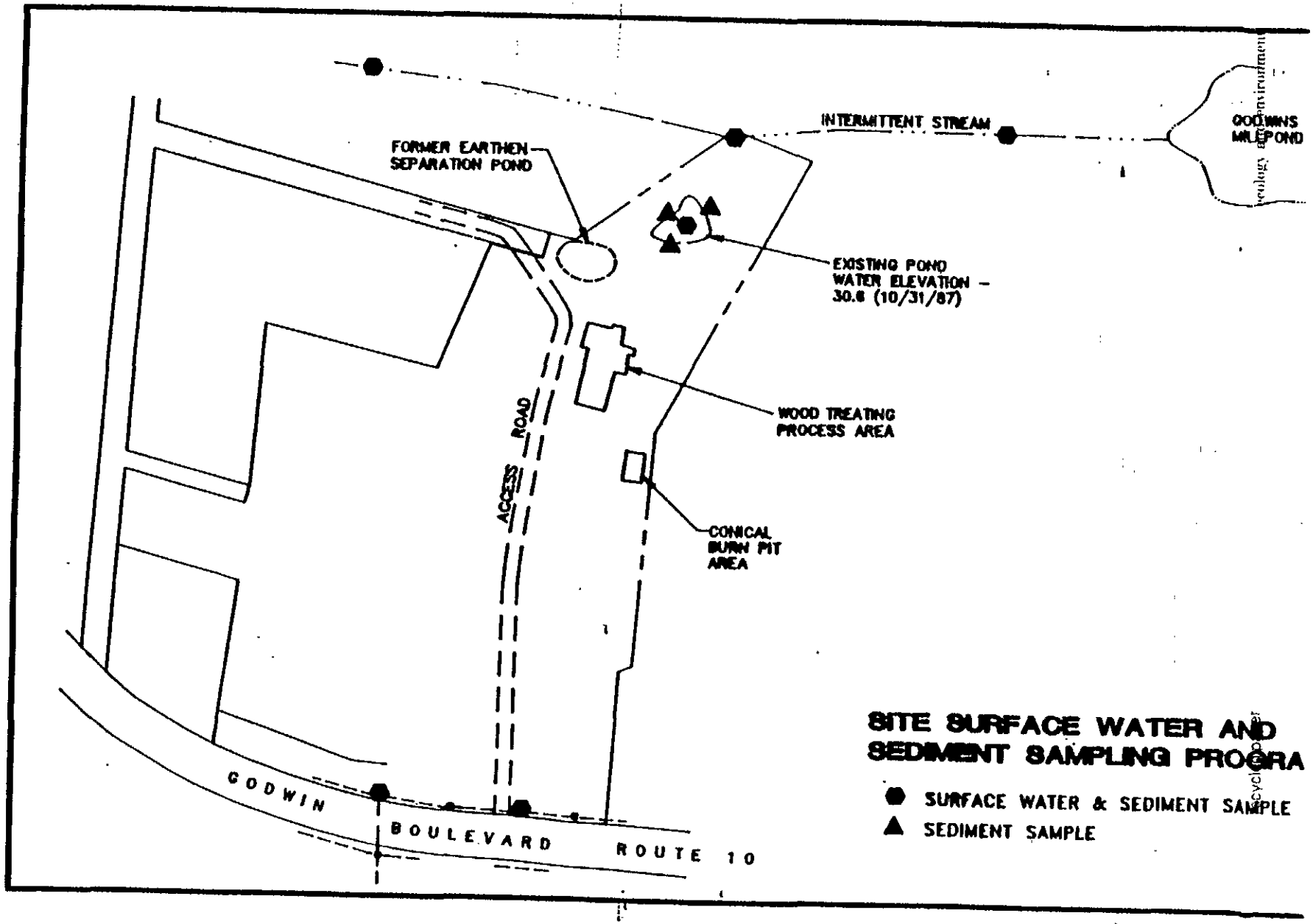
B: List of questions and answers

C: Mailing list (sign-in sheet)

SUPERFUND PROCESS







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Attachment A
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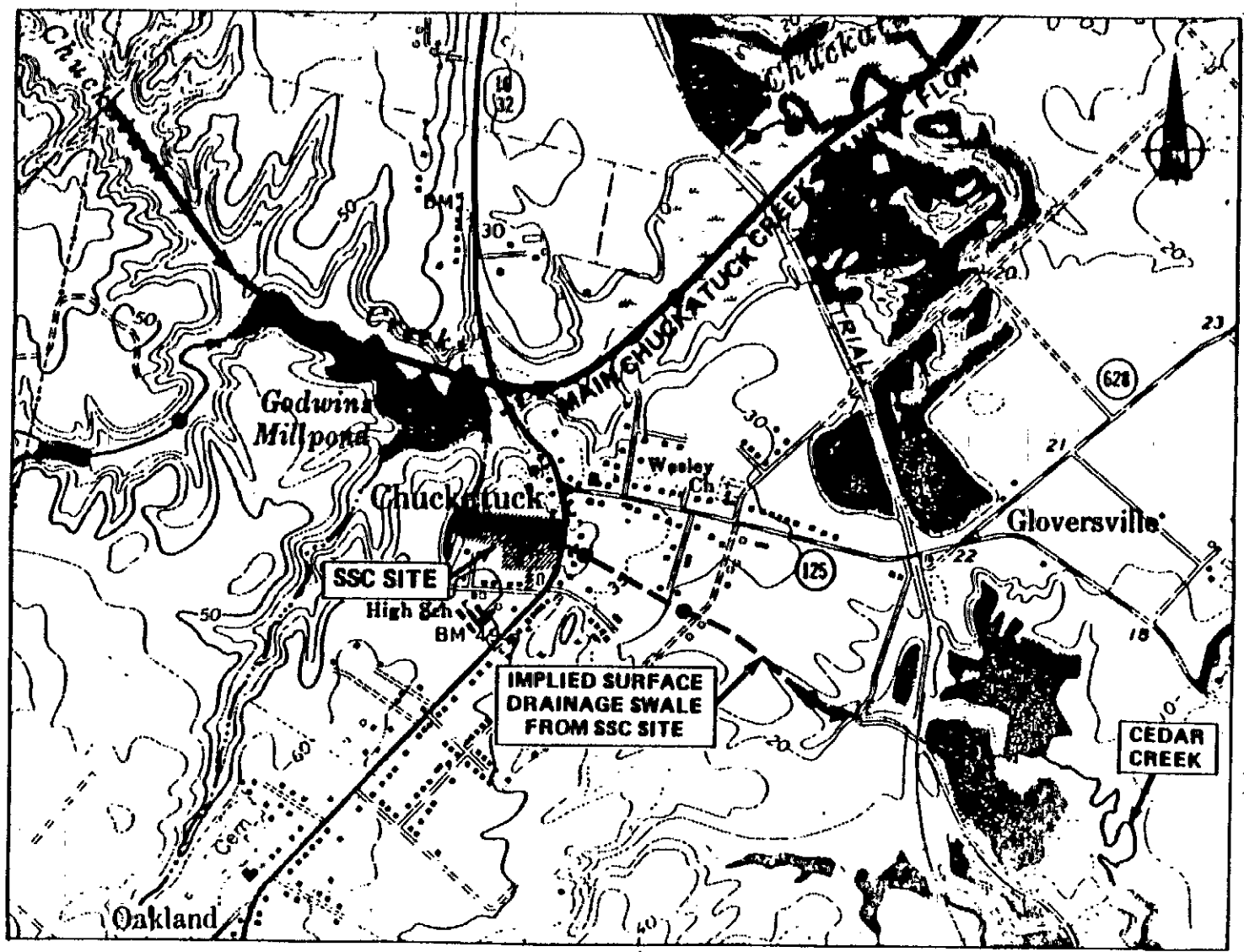
ORIGINAL (Red)

OFF-SITE SURFACE WATER AND SEDIMENT SAMPLING PROGRAM



KEY:

● SURFACE WATER AND SEDIMENT SAMPLE

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ORIGINAL

Attachment B

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q: Why are no samples being taken northwest of the stream and east of Godwin's Millpond? Could contamination on the other side of Godwin's Millpond contribute to contamination of the Millpond?

A: EPA is taking samples on the site, behind the site, and along the stream in the direction of flow to the pond. Any contamination found should be what is in the pond. If this is not so, the EPA will know that contamination of the Millpond is coming from a different location.

Q: If EPA took more samples, wouldn't they know from the beginning (if contamination was coming from a different source)?

A: EPA has to limit the number of samples at some point. The sample sites chosen are taken from a surface water model, which predicts how much plume is going into the pond. The model should correlate with any information from the samples in and around the pond. EPA will consider this comment, however.

Q: Gas and diesel fuel have been leaking from a service station into the ground. What effect will this have later on?

A: This is part of the reason why EPA chose the sampling points where they did. The EPA chose sampling points on the Saunders Supply Company side of the boulevard. If they chose points on the other side, they might get interference.

Q: The service station which is leaking is on the SSC side of the boulevard. Why doesn't EPA check it out while they're there?

A: EPA will follow up on that gas leak.

Q: The service station has dug up the topsoil down to the water table and sandbagged it. There is still oil in it.

Saunders Supply Company did not know what they were getting into when they started into "penta." I also do not believe you people knew what was going to be in the ground.

A: Nobody knew what was the best practice at the time, what was environmentally damaging. And now, we're cleaning it up. That is what Superfund is all about.

Q: The Saunders Supply Company caused bushes and trees in my backyard to die. But I still have no intention of leaving.

Q: How and who will investigate the risk potential?

A: Ecology and Environment, with direction from EPA. They will determine how much people have been exposed and in what way.

Q: Saunders Supply Company has been doing that activity for 25 years. I have been here 50 years. No one has been sick from any contamination from Saunders Supply Company. What could the potential danger be? No one has said they're sick or feeling bad.

A: Nothing is happening right now. But that is why EPA is doing the air modelling - to make sure there is not a risk. EPA is not here to put anyone out of business.

Q: If nothing has happened in 25 years, how is EPA smart enough to predict what'll happen 25 years from now?

A: EPA uses toxicology studies of how much people have been exposed and at what levels people start having reactions. This will determine the risk posed by the contaminants.

A: Another example is groundwater. Ten years ago, the groundwater may have been contaminated, and it is only now starting to move from on-site to off-site, and posing a risk. EPA is concerned about that.

Q: If you're testing Saunder's wells and not finding anything, why are you going upstream or elsewhere, if it's not on-site?

A: EPA has to make sure the contamination has not already left the property.

A: Maybe it's not in the groundwater, but moved in the air.

Q: It did go in the air in the old process. Does it stay in the air forever?

A: No; and they're no longer using that process. The example was used to illustrate how contamination could have moved off-site.

A: There are some advantages in having monitoring wells upstream. It can be used as a point of reference to compare with what is on-site and what is downgradient. Also, when PCP was in operation, contaminants went into the air and came down in a particular region, that can be mapped out. To have a comprehensive knowledge of the site, we need to know what is off-site. We will use a progressive analysis to determine if what is on the site is in the pond. If we did an analysis of the the whole area, we could find contaminants everywhere, and it would be very expensive. We are trying to define just the problem of the site. However, a contingency analysis would allow that if a correlation does not exist between the site and the pond, a secondary source may exist on the other side and we may have a supplementary study.

Q: It could be that years ago someone on the other side of the pond used the same chemicals, and those same chemicals are seeping in from that other usage.

A: We are going from the site to the pond. If the progression from the site shows contamination decreasing, and then at the pond, it suddenly jumps up, then we would think of a possible secondary source.

A: We would also look at other industries in the area if there is a greater concentration.

Q: What if the industries are no longer there?

A: The costs would be enormous to take tests everywhere. We're trying to determine what may be coming from the Saunders Supply Company site.

Q: Does the stuff just stay there or does it settle to the bottom?

A: Most of it would settle to the bottom. We see hardly any of it in the water. Depending on how long something stays; and it depends on what happens to it chemically when its in the water itself. We'll be checking both the water and the sediments.

Q: What do we do in the meantime?

A: The water is tested and it is treated. Someone from the city, Mark Thompson, can answer that. How often is the water tested?

A: It is tested daily when it comes into the plant. When we're purifying it, it is tested every three hours to make sure there are no changes. We did a study to determine what would happen if all the CCA spilled into the pond. If all of it came into the plant, we would have 99.9% removal. Even if the whole tank fell into the lake, we would have sufficient treatment process to remove it. What is of the most concern is what is in the sediment. In the summer, we get alot of anerobic action, the water starts stagnating. The iron content goes up, and the other heavy metals would also have a chemical reaction to affect the whole pond, and we would take preventive action.

Q: I have a lumber business. I have worked with treated lumber and my sons have worked with treated lumber, and we've never had any problems. I've eaten fish out of the Millpond. I've been drinking the water from Chuckatuck. I'm not afraid of it. My family owns land directly behind the site, and until I see more reason to be concerned, I'd rather see my tax dollars spent in another way. I don't feel like there's a serious problem here.

A: That's why we're conducting this study. If we determine there is no concern there, we're not going to bother more with it. We're not here to create problems. As far as your tax dollars, Superfund money comes from a tax on petrochemical companies. So, although we tax those companies, it's not really money coming out of your pocket.

Q: Gas just went up from 86 cents to 98 cents a gallon.

A: Regarding the comment about handling dry wood, the exposure from handling dry wood is completely different then when the wood is wet and dripping water, and from burning the sludge or whatever.

Q: You talk about risk to the people. Do you people know what the risk is and how much you have to be exposed to in order to be at risk?

A: It depends on what the contaminants are and how you're exposed to them, and what levels the contaminants are.

Q: That's what I'm asking. Tell me what I have to do to be exposed too much. This site has been going on since 1949. What is the oldest site you people have tested? That gives you 60 years of wood treating information for testing people in the area.

A: It is difficult to extrapolate information from this site to other sites. It depends on what the contaminants are, and the soils could be different. It could hide it more, or release it more. Risk is based on laboratory studies of the contaminants.

Q: A sample of water was taken 18 months ago. Was there risk at that time?

A: No, it was not an immediate risk. If it had been an immediate risk, we would then have gone out and done something. This is a long-term study because it may have long-term impacts. Testing that was done previously is almost a drop in the bucket compared to what we're doing today.

Q: The plant has been there since 1949. That's sixty years. Maybe the soils are different, but the PCP would still be there. That's 50-60 years to process.

A: The risk is based on levels of what might happen, not actually what did happen. A place could be using PCP for 60, 80, 100 years. Just because something happened there, doesn't mean it won't happen somewhere else. That's why we have to use our laboratory studies.

A: If you want to know what the effects of different chemicals are, we can get you copies of levels and effects of different chemicals.

Q: A few years ago, in Hopewell, a firm released a whole lot of Kepone into the James River. They said all the people working there were going to die. They had all kinds of things wrong with them. They closed the James River for fish, shellfish and crab. They're all still living there. Now 7-8 years later, its open to fish. Now, if you want to do some testing, why don't you test the people that have worked in this plant and handled it physically for 20 odd years, and see what effect it has had on them.

A: It may not effect whoever is working there. Risks are based on what might happen to a population. We're talking about one in one million and one in one hundred thousand who might actually get cance

A: And when you're talking about cancer, you're talking about a 25-30 year latency period, just like asbestos. Those people who worked with it, and then got cancer 30 years later. There's so much uncertainty.

Q: Why not test people who have worked with it?

A: The problem with testing people is that you have other outside factors- people who smoke, people who work in mines. They have a higher tendency for it. Some of the people have an hereditary effect that way. That's why we can't use testing people.

A: We're also not a health agency. We determine what the potential threat is. Another agency determines the effect on people that were around when the process was going on.

Q: Does anyone know what we're dealing with; in terms of contamination, in terms of a chemical, the effects, what it does. It's in the groundwater, and that's it? It's on the market and we don't know anything about it?

A: You can't just put a chemical on the market, anymore. It has to go by EPA. At the next public meeting, once we know the information, the nature and extent of contamination, we'll bring along a toxicologist.

Q: On other sites with soil contamination and groundwater, what happens to it? Does it dissipate? Does it stay there?

A: Basically, the range. Some off-site. On some, it stays there. Saunders has been helping to keep it there. They've been pumping out the groundwater, and reusing it back into the treatment system.

Q: I think people are asking, "What are the physical properties of PCP and our knowledge of the physical properties? Is it soluble, does it move, can it be transported? Is it a persistent chemical?"

A: PCP was used in an oil base and basically it stays in the oil, even in the water and the groundwater. Everything we're looking for is oil and grease. Increased levels of oil and grease may generate information on the levels of PCP.

Q: Have you indicated you've already made these studies at other sites? Have you completed them, and if so, what was your recommendation? What did you find?

A: The problem is, we don't know yet. That's why we're conducting the study.

A: At other sites, the tendency has been to take the soil and burn it off. As for the groundwater, we have to pump it out into a treatment system, and then discharge it back. In order to get it out, we don't want to be keyed into that. If there's a more economical, more sensible way, we'd rather do it.

Q: The city is already treating the water.

A: They're treating the water at a time. We're treating the water supply. The city would not want that responsibility for x number of years.

Q: I have been using water from these wells off and on for the last 10 years. In the last 5 years, I have noticed a decrease in the levels of PCP. W.R. Grace tests every 30 days. They're not picking up anything in the water. I've gone back to using these wells. But the State Water Control Board says if water goes through the soil, it'll pick (contaminants) back up. Is that possible that you know of?

A: Yes, the chemicals leach out of the soil into the groundwater.

Q: You say you're looking for oil and gas. With this oil spill at the gas station, couldn't the contamination be from a different source. The water runs across property lines, from that gas station.

A: The chemicals in the gas station are different from the chemicals in the PCP. The levels and properties of these chemicals are known. We have to identify how much is on the site. The rate at which they move through the soil depends on the particular site. Each site has to be studied. You have to take out the soil and look at it, and characterize it. When heavy metals are involved, it is much slower. It could take as many as ten years to move half a mile. Until we have enough information from the site, we cannot characterize the site. Someone can work in a factory and be exposed to a chemical but because of the rules of OSHA, be safe enough. But once the chemical gets into the environment, the effects are different. For instance, I can work with lead, and have no problems. But if I dump the lead into a river, or on a playground, and my children eat the soil in the playground, the effect on them will be very different. Also, organisms have the tendency to store the chemicals. We have to assure that on a longer term basis, it is safe. It is the responsibility of an accountable government to ensure that what is clean stays clean.

Q: If this treatment has been going on for 50 years, how many other sites in the State of Virginia have been tested and completed, and what effect has it had on the communities and the people, and what were your recommmendations? And how does EPA feel its smart enough to tell us what'll happen 25 years from now if you haven't been able to tell us on this point?

A: The Superfund program began only 9 years ago. They looked at what processes were going on that were wrong, and realized they needed to correct them. Once a site is reported, we begin with a Preliminary Assessment. And if these sites are a threat or potential threat to human health and the environment they are listed on the National Priorities List. In the State, there are 21 sites on the National Priorities List. About 1000 sites have been looked at. Some involve counties, and some involve private industries. Only one site has been delisted - completely cleaned up. Of the remaining twenty, the

sites are at different levels of action. The state is working to get the cleanup done. The longer they stay on the list, the more expensive they are. We do 50 investigations per year to determine if sites are serious enough for the National Priorities List.

Q: If you've done 50 investigations, how long does it take you to find out what is going on there. Is it bad or good?

A: We don't know how things are moving on this site, if at all. They're pumping up the groundwater. They may have trapped the plume from going off-site. It may not. That's what we have to find out. Then we can determine what the risk is.

A: There's only one other site in the Commonwealth, that's in Richmond. They're at the same stage as this one.

Q: If the Millpond is contaminated, how do you propose to get it out?

A: We haven't gotten that far. I don't know.

Q: Saunders Supply Company is doing the best they can. They dug out some of the soil, hauled it off, and put sand in it. What did they do with that dirt they dug up and hauled off in a truck?

A: It was placed in a landfill.

Q: Now you've got it in two places; in a landfill and over there. It doesn't matter where it is, if there's dirt and water, it'll get you.

A: We have a law called RCRA. We don't just create another problem by sticking the hazardous waste somewhere else. We have to treat it before we can dispose of it. Anything we do at Saunders will be treated so that it doesn't leach out.

Q: PCP has been used as a vegetative killer. Are you telling us that 20 years from now, you're going to come back to those farmers who have been using chemicals according to the labels, and tell us you've got a problem?

A: All pesticides have to be reviewed and approved by EPA.

Q: Twenty-five years ago, PCP as a vegetative killer was a labelled use. And it was also used in chicken houses as a termite killer.

Q: What scientific data do you have that it is a problem?

A: We don't know that there is a problem at the site. We know there is a potential problem. We know that the groundwater and the water in the pond may be contaminated now or in the future. We know chemicals have been found in the soil.

Q: After two years of testing, and you still don't know that there is a problem, what will be the cost of the study? How much taxpayers dollars will be spent in this RI/FS? How much is Ecology & Environment going to be paid?

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A: Right now, in rough numbers, it will be $800,000 for the Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study.

Q: But there is no scientific data that there is a problem?

A: There is a problem because there is a potential threat.
Q: You are going to pay for it?

A: It will be paid with Superfund monies.

Q: You won't bill anyone?

A: Before we began the study, we negotiated with the Saunders people about doing the study. They did a workplan and decided it was too much money for them at this time to do the study. That is why we're doing it with Superfund money. After this report, we'll go back to the Saunders people and say this is the recommended alternative if there is any. If Saunders can't pay for construction of the alternative, we'll again use Superfund money. At the end of all this, we'll again go back to Saunders under Cost Recovery and try to get money back on what we spent.

Q: Can you repeat that figure?

A: $800,000.

Q: You're spending $800,000 and its just a potential danger. You say $800,000 is not putting anyone out of business? Why don't you just buy Chuckatuck?

A: We're not going up to them tomorrow and saying you owe us $800,000.

Q: Hasn't Saunders Supply already spent alot of money?

A: Yes, it has. But the ironic thing about the Superfund law is that it makes people liable for what they did even if it was the best they knew how.

Q: What about us farmers? I'm using chemicals, but I'm using it according to labels. You're saying, according to Superfund, you could come after me.

A: EPA does not have a policy to go after farmers that are spraying their crops.

Q: Is this the only business in Virginia that was using this type of wood treating process? You're going after one individual company?

A: There are at least two other wood treating facilities on the National Priorities List. Both of those companies are paying for the studies themselves. There were quite a few other wood treatment facilities investigated. But they weren't serious enough a potential threat to human health and the environment to be put on the National Priorities

List. EPA looked at facilities with the most potential threat to the environment - wood treatment facilities and landfills.

Q: Our landfill was approved. But now we're being investigated as a city. We operated in good faith. We did what we were told to do by an agency. But again, we're having to spent taxpayers' dollars, just like Saunders Supply Company to do RI/FS studies. That's the way the law works. The congressmen and senators set it up, not these people.

Q: Saunders Supply Company has done everything possible. It's one of the cleanest operations I've ever seen. I've been involved with this site for 10 years. I don't know how anyone knows what's going on, when everytime you turn around, you have another group of people coming in. They're running around, doing the same tests over and over.

A: There has been a Preliminary Assessment. There has not been an in-depth study of the site. We are required by law to provide a permanent remedy - whether that means we do nothing, or we prepare an alternative to clean up the site, we are required by law to do that. We want to prevent a problem further down the road. We're here tonight to tell you there's a potential problem. Ten years from now, it could cost fifteen times as much to cleanup. There are alot of parties involved, but that's why Chris Jones is here tonight and the State. This is a coordinated effort.

Q: Why should individuals, or individual companies like Saunders, be penalized for using chemicals as stated on the label, when the chemical companies are the ones really doing the damage?

A: The law says to go after the owners, operators and the generators. We would rather go after the deep pockets. If we could go after someone else who could pay for the study, we would do that. We have an enforcement branch to go after these potentially responsible parties.

Q: If you give them a clean bill of health after this study is over, and 10 years from now something else comes up, what's going to happen?

A: We shouldn't miss that. That's why we're studying all different mediums.

A: We wouldn't have been doing our jobs very well. We'd have to go clean it up.

Q: And you'd get another $800,000.

A: It depends on Congress.

Q: If the salt treatment process being used now is according to labels, are you going to make them pay for a study to see what pollutants are going into the soil from a current labelled use?

A: Today the process is in a closed loop. The wood drips onto concrete pads, into a reservoir and back into the system. There is no sludge, no burning, nothing going off the site. Before they used a closed loop is the problem. It's not the chemicals, but the way it was allowed to get into the soil. It's a closed system now. There's nothing coming off the site now.

Q: The penta process smelt so bad we couldn't hang our clothes out to dry. They came back speckled and smelt like penta.

A: The problems were how the wood was allowed to dry, the use of an unlined earthen pond as a separator, that they burned some of the sludge.

Q: The closed loop was a required labelled practice back in 1974?

A: No, it's not the chemical, but how you use it. You can buy pesticide, but if you dump it in the creek, you're causing contamination. It's not the fact that you have it, but what you do with it.

Q: But the process wasn't illegal back then?

A: That's right.

Q: It still hasn't been stated how dangerous this is to people and how much they knew where it is. We still don't know how much danger we're in, how much danger we'll be in in 5 years. What is the purpose of the study if not to protect the persons of this community? How many buckets of dirt, or how many buckets of water will I have to drink before it will kill me? Isn't that the main purpose?

A: We will identify the risk associated with contamination of the site during the study.

A: We have a list of chemicals with contaminate levels for drinking waters. Contamination above those levels is an unacceptable risk. At this point, the water is safe. It's being tested and treated. The reason we're doing this study is to determine if there is a problem now or later on. It's not a quick and dirty study.

Q: You said you were just looking at PCP, copper, chromium, and arsenic. That's only four.

A: There are also others. From burning PCP, that could cause dioxin and furans. So that's two more things you have to look for.

Q: If you've done 30,000 investigations nationwide, at least one of those sites must be similar to this one. What have you found out?

A: Only 1000 of those 30,000 sites will have this type of investigation. I don't know how many of those are at this point. But as said before, they may have the same contaminants, but different soils, different media.

A: Of those 30,000, only a handful are wood treating facilities which are on the list and being investigated. Of those, most of them used creosote - for telephone, railroad ties. Most of our investigations have been those types of plants.

Q: Saunders Supply Company must have been an advanced corporation in 1964.

A: I'm not saying there has been only one. I'm saying the majority of wood treating facilities have been creosote.

Q: So we have no concrete answers to anything from other sites?

A: Yes, we do. We know that the best way to remove the contamination is to burn the soil.

Q: I hope what I eat doesn't make me sick. I have a garden in my backyard.

Q: I think these people are asking, "Do you have a base toxicological knowledge of these contaminants? Do you know in general what these contaminants can do to you, not in relation to the site."

A: From studies of pentachlorophenol, we have some base knowledge of how it effects humans. We have knowledge of how chromium, copper and arsenic affect humans, at what levels. What we have to do at this site is put an exposure scenario together. We determine what is the exposure to the average citizen, to the average worker. Then we look at our toxicological base knowledge and apply it to the site. Then we calculate the risk. And that's how the risk assessment is done. When we come back to you, we'll be able to say, from this site, drinking the water will pose this risk, inhaling the dirt will pose another risk, ingesting the dirt, 2 ounces in your mouth over 70 years will pose this risk, over one week will pose this risk. We'll have all those answers for you. We don't have those answers right now.

Q: You ought to have an answer from the people who have been dealing with it for 25 years and the next door neighbors.

A: There are two types of studies. There are toxicological studies, which are what we do, which is to find out what risk is posed. What you're referring to is an epidemiological study which is the effects of workers at the site over a long period of time. We are not a health agency. The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry do the health effects. They have a coordinator in our office, and ATSDR looks at these sites and they determine through our investigations, through our sampling that the site warrants a health study. They'll come in and look at it. They can't tell if it's warranted right now, and we start taking samples and find out just how bad the contaminants are at this site. We don't have the answers on risks right now.

Q: If you're not a health agency, how are you going to tell us how it'll affect us 10 years from now?

A: Through a risk study, which is all probabilities. You may have a one in 10 or one in one million, or one in one billion probability of getting cancer.

Q: For $800,000, it doesn't sound reasonable.

A: I can understand that, but our science is limited.

Q: Did you say that the best way to take care of contaminated soil is to burn it?

A: On other sites, they determined that.

Q: What happens to the air space with burning it?

A: It's burned in a controlled, safe way. And you'll have an opportunity to comment on it.

Q: How long is the study?

A: We're estimating 18 months.

Q: I am an attorney working for Saunders Supply Company. I'd like to clarify that the EPA has proposed putting Saunders Supply Company on the National Priorities List. The site is not on the final National Priorities List. The company has filed comments raising questions on two occasions on how the risks have been calculated from the outset. It is not a foregone conclusion that anyone needs to be out there. People talk about it as being on the National Priorities List, and something will have to be done. I hope I did not hear EPA saying that this site is on the final NPL.

A: The site is proposed for the National Priorities List. It's a two step process. Once a site is ranked, and it reaches a certain ranking (a mathematical ranking), it's proposed for the National Priorities List. For a period of time, it's put up for public comment as to why it should or should not be on this prestigious National Priorities List. If, after all the comments have been received, we still believe it belongs on the National Priorities List, we actually put it on the National Priorities List. That has not happened yet. What we do in the meantime at the proposed stage, is start our study so we're not hanging around for years waiting for public comment. We're out there trying to determine if there's a problem, so we don't waste a year in between. We cannot start an action while the site is still proposed, by law. We have to wait for the site to be promulgated on the National Priorities List. But we can take samples, develop alternatives, and even select and design a remedy. But we can't spend money. The big ticket is the remedial work. $800,000 is a drop in the bucket.

We have a small firm here. Most sites have big chemical oil companies that EPA goes after. They negotiate and either cleanup or EPA cleans up. We offer small companies these same opportunities. They operated in good faith. They negotiated. They couldn't pay for it. The site was turned over to the Superfund side of EPA. So we'll start the investigation.

Q: Will they have to pay for the cleanup if you decide it has to be cleaned up?

A: When we decide what needs to be done, if there is some cleanup involved, we'll go back to Saunders and say this is what we'll do. Saunders and others comment. If Saunders cannot pay, we'll use Superfund money and implement the remedy. Another EPA group gets involved. They see how much we've spent at the site, the financial capabilities of the potentially responsible parties, and then decide what they'll bill the company for that cleanup. That is the Cost Recovery action part of EPA.

Q: If you come back and say there's one in 750,000 chance somebody is going to get cancer, and that's unacceptable and has to be cleaned up, and everyone in the community says we don't want it, then that doesn't matter? You're going to clean it up anyway?

A: If we get strong public opposition for the right reasons, then we'll change the remedy. We'll have to take another look at it. We come out with a proposed plan, and ask you what you think about it.

A: The law also requires that we select a remedy that is cost effective.

Q: Why are you picking on Saunders? Why don't you pick on the chemical company that produced?

A: It is not the chemical that caused the problem. It is the waste disposal. They may have operated in the best manner possible. But Superfund is blind to that. It says there is a problem, and we have to clean it up.

Q: I've been here two hours and haven't heard a single fact on what the effect is or how much you have to be exposed to it.

A: Our information is limited.

Q: What if you dig a well in the exact spot of an old post hole, and the contamination is actually from the treated post?

A: The chemical may be different on the post. We're also digging other wells.

Q: Of everyone that's come here about the site, I've never seen the same one twice. How can you have good information?

A: As your councilman, I will act as the go-between.

Q: If a site has been proposed, and all the investigative work is done, and you determine not to put it on the final list, can you initiate cost recovery?

A: We will follow up on that question (see Note).

Q: What has happened to the eight years of studies - Saunders and the State Water Control Board have done a number of tests?

A: We have used that information to come up with the Workplan. All that data was used. Once you get involved in it, it takes a long time. You have to decide what you're going to do, then you have to go out and do it, and the time to do the sampling and have it quality checked, and then evaluate the results.

Q: You're saying 18 months and the EPA man that was here in December said 2-5 years.

A: The workplan hadn't been finalized then. Also, when we say 18 months, you have to give or take a few months. For example, if the contamination has extended further, the study will take longer.

Q: For $800,000, we could use studies we have and take the whole site over the South Carolina line.

A: Legally, we're not allowed to do that.

A: If you're frustrated with Superfund, we suggest writing your Congressman. That's your opportunity to comment on the program, now that its touching you personally.

Q: How long have you people been connected with this particular project?

A: The Community Relations Program starts up when the Remedial Investigation begins, so I've been on it one month. The project manager has been with it 6 months.

A: The Enforcement Branch did the earlier negotiations with Saunders. Once it was determined that Saunders could not afford to do the study, it came over to the Superfund section.

Q: The man who came in December asked me if i trusted EPA, and I said I would unless they told me something that wasn't true. I guess that's why he's not here tonight.

A: Bill Draper is still working for EPA, but he's working on a site in California.

* Note: To date, EPA has not pursued cost recovery at sites where no further action is required after the RI/FS. However, the law does permit EPA to sue for all costs incurred.

Q: If the site is not on the Superfund list, why does the newspaper say it is on the list?

A: I don't know. The proposed and final list of sites are often treated the same way.

Q: Didn't the newspaper get their information from you?

A: Yes, it did. But our news release says that the site is on the proposed list. I will give you a copy of the new release after the meeting so you can see for yourself.

Attachment C

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